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Senator Lyda Green District N

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Legislature Protects Alaskans' "Right-to-Farm"

(JUNEAU) – Both farmers and their neighbors are protected under a bill passed by the House today.

Senate Bill 60, sponsored by Sen. Lyda Green (R-Matanuska-Susitna), couples a farmer's grandfathered right to continue farming to filing and maintaining a farm conservation plan with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil and Water Conservation Service. Surrounding property owners would be protected because changes to the conservation plan, such as expanding the farm's operations, would not necessarily be granted.

"Urban residents often move to rural areas and are surprised by activities on neighboring farms," said Green. "They may not be prepared for the smells or sounds produced by farm animals or farm equipment, or by the machinery used on a farm. This bill protects the farmer's right to continue to run their farms and prevents unnecessary lawsuits."

"In addition to protection for the farmers, this bill prevents people who buy property near farms from getting unwelcome surprises," said Green. "During the transaction process the buyer would be notified if the property is within one mile of an agricultural operation."

Exports of carrots and potatoes grown in Alaska provide a valuable part of the economy, making the protection of farmers more than just a "right-to-farm" issue, said Green. And increasing demand by Alaskans for fresh, local produce can only be met if farmers are able to keep operating.

"Alaska has the opportunity to place protections in statute now – both for the farmers and the new property buyers – so that future agricultural operations will be able to continue providing Alaskan products while protecting the agricultural way of life" said Green.

"Rep. John Harris is the prime sponsor of the companion bill in the House," said Green. "The efforts by Rep. Harris and his staff member, Peter Fellman, have made this legislation a reality, and I applaud all of their hard work."

SB 60 passed the House with a vote of 30 –9 and now goes to the governor for signature.

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An excerpt from Rep. John Harris' floor comments in support of SB 60 are available on the Majority Actuality Line, 800-478-6540.